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(1913)

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WILLIAM BREWSTER

May 18, 1920.



## KEEP BIRD PLUMAGE OUT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, nearly halfway to China, lies the little Island of Laysan, one of the westernmost of the Hawaiian group. This island is not occupied by man, but is the home of many birds, among them a species of albatross. So numerous are these albatrosses that were one to walk among them—as he could freely, for they are not afraid of man—he would have to pick his way carefully to avoid kicking the birds or treading on their eggs.

These albatrosses have a dance, of which, apparently, they are very fond, a series of set figures during which the birds circle about each other, fence with their bills, point their bills to the zenith and groan, and do many other amusing things. It is a very polite dance—the birds bow to each other frequently during its continuance. Sometimes one will stop in the middle of the dance and finding a twig will pick it up in its bill and offer it, with a nice bow, to its partner, which does not take the twig, however, but picking up another offers that in turn with a bow. This closes the incident, the twigs are dropped and the dance is resumed from the point at which it was interrupted. It is reported by two naturalists that have visited Laysan that if a man bows to one of these albatrosses, the birds will bow to him in return, presumably on the supposition that he is beginning the dance.

Were a moving picture of this dance to be taken and exhibited, how it would interest and amuse! Millions of people throughout the world would find enjoyment in such a film. No moving picture has yet been secured of the dance, but it will not be long, in this day of keen search for novelty of subjects, before we shall have moving pictures, not only of this, but of the dances and various evolutions of many other birds (for the albatrosses are by no means singular in this regard)—**provided we save the birds.**

We nearly lost these albatrosses. The Japanese planned an expedition to Laysan and Lisiansky islands to exterminate certain species, including the albatrosses, for their plumage, which was to be shipped to Paris for the millinery trade.

As soon as we learned of their intention (at that time I had the honor to hold a position in the U. S. Department of Agriculture with duties pertaining to the preservation of birds and game) we appealed to President Roosevelt, who immediately made a Federal bird reservation of Laysan and adjacent islands. We have sixty-three such reservations—non-agricultural tracts of land owned by the United States that are the haunts of large colonies of interesting birds. Any one who injures or disturbs the birds on one of these reservations is liable to prosecution by the Federal Government. One of the latest to be established was the subject of one of the last official acts of President Taft, who, on the third of March, 1913, set aside the whole Aleutian Archipelago in Alaska as a bird reservation. Later, on the 19th of March, President Wilson practically made a bird reservation of the Canal Zone, by prohibiting the killing of any birds in that tract.

The Japanese failed to regard the President's proclamation concerning Laysan—perhaps they did not know of it—and sent their expedition to the island as had been planned. Laysan is out of the usual line of travel and the Japanese were on the island nine months before we learned of their presence there. As soon as we did learn of it, however, we made arrangements with the Revenue Cutter Service to send the *Thetis* (then stationed on the Pacific Coast) to Laysan. The vessel went at the earliest practicable moment to the scene of the slaughter, found twenty-three Japanese on Laysan and Lisiansky islands, arrested and took them to Honolulu (where they were tried and convicted) and confiscated and destroyed the plumage.



During the nine months of uninterrupted slaughter there had been time to kill a great many birds. Captain Jacobs, of the *Thetis*, by careful estimate, placed the total destruction at 259,000 birds.

The methods employed by these Japanese were very cruel. Coveting only the wings of the albatrosses, they would frequently cut these off and let the birds go, to bleed to death. And finding that the plumpness of the albatrosses made it difficult to dress their plumage, they conceived the plan of driving the birds into pits and allowing them to starve to death, thus getting rid of the troublesome fat and so expediting the work.

Such cruel methods are in vogue wherever birds are killed for their plumage. The men engaged in the business are usually of a lower order, whose one object is to perform their work as expeditiously as possible, regardless of pain or other result of their operations. A heron 'rookery' in Florida which was shot over by plume hunters last May was thus described by a warden who visited it, too late to prevent the shooting:

Everywhere in the rookery, which covered several acres, we found the remains of dead long whites [egrets] and a few of the spoonbills that had been shot. There were many little long whites that had died in the nests [of starvation, their parents having been killed], and their bodies had been eaten by buzzards. The trees were full of shot from the guns of the murderers, *and the sight was the saddest one I have ever seen of the sort.*

**And the birds are being exterminated.** The slaughter of birds for millinery purposes is greater than ever before in the history of the world. The emissaries of the milliners of London, Paris, Berlin, and New York are carrying their devastating work to the uttermost corners of the earth. Wherever plume birds are found the work of destruction is going on. Where the white man can not penetrate, the plumage is obtained from native savages by exchange. In New Guinea bird-of-paradise skins are bartered by the natives for opium; hence the price paid for the decoration of hats with paradise plumes is the extermination of the most beautiful of all birds and the spread of the opium habit.

**If nothing be done to stop the slaughter of plume birds it is safe to say that within the next ten years from twelve to twenty-five species of the most beautiful and interesting birds of the world will be completely exterminated—never to be restored.**

How shall we stop it?

We have appealed to the women to abandon the fashion of feather wearing, and thousands have responded nobly to our appeals. But the number whose hearts, or even whose ears, we can not reach is so great that it is hopeless to try to save the birds by this means. Remember that feather fashions are followed in South America, as well as North America, in New Zealand, as well as England.

We have tried prohibiting the killing of the birds. But it is impossible to police the solitudes where these birds are found. Even in Florida, with its strict laws and small number of heronries now left, egrets are being killed and their plumes are being shipped to market despite the best efforts of State and Federal authorities and Audubon Societies.

We have tried prohibiting export of plumage from the State or the country where the birds are killed. But plumage is smuggled out regardless of such laws. India, Japan, Australia, New Guinea, and other countries prohibit export of bird plumage; but packages of plumes are regularly received from these countries.

There is only one way—**CLOSE THE MARKETS.** *Prohibit importation of plumage into those countries in which are the great distributing markets of the world.* Only recently the colonies of Great Britain united in an appeal to the home government, saying virtually, "Close the London market, or we can not save our birds." England, in the last five years, has made four attempts to prohibit importation of plumage, but the bills have all failed.

A fifth attempt is now being made, backed by Lord Curzon. Germany is reported as ripe for such action. Australia two years ago prohibited importation into her territory of the plumage of many birds, including all those that are in immediate danger of extermination.

Finally, a similar project is under way in the United States. When a Democratic Congress was elected, pledged to a revision of the tariff, it seemed to me an opportune moment to secure the insertion in the new tariff of a clause prohibiting importation of the plumage of any wild bird. I suggested the plan to a number of persons, including such able and energetic bird protectionists as Dr. W. T. Hornaday, Director of the New York Zoological Park, T. Gilbert Pearson, Secretary of the National Association of Audubon Societies, E. H. Forbush, State Ornithologist of Massachusetts, and Jefferson Butler, President of the Michigan Audubon Society, all of whom received it with enthusiasm and immediately took it up with zeal. We inaugurated a vigorous and successful campaign, and when the tariff bill was passed by the House of Representatives it contained the measure I had suggested.

The Finance Committee of the Senate, however, modified the provision twice, first exempting from its restrictions such species as are commonly recognized as edible or pestiferous (a practical nullification of the original measure), and later, while the bill was in caucus, making it apply only to aigrettes, thus proposing to permit the destruction of all birds except egrets to continue unchecked.

The bill was reported to the Senate in this form. Almost immediately, however, Senator McLean, the author of the migratory bird bill which recently became a law, offered an amendment to restore the original provision as it passed the House of Representatives.

We are now uniting in an urgent appeal to all who favor the preservation of the beautiful birds of the world (and who does not?) to deluge the Senate with such a flood of individual and personal protests as will show that body how vast a majority of intelligent and influential citizens condemn the action of the Finance Committee and demand restoration of the House provision, as moved by Senator McLean. Not merely sympathy but active support is necessary in the present contingency. Every man and woman is urged to write a strong letter of protest to the senators of his or her State, and also to Senator F. M. Simmons of North Carolina, who, as Chairman of the Finance Committee and prospectively an important member of the conference committee that will be appointed to adjust differences between the House and Senate in the tariff bill, is the most powerful and influential person in the matter. He alone has power to authorize a modification of the terms of the bill while it is before the Senate; and when the bill shall be in conference he will probably be one of six (two of whom it is most likely will be favorable to the measure) who will have authority to give final shape to the provision. (A list of Senators is given at the end of this circular.)

Friends of the birds, lovers of beauty, advocates of humane treatment of the lower forms of life, upholders of the Christian doctrines of love, tenderness, and mercy, it is for you to determine whether or not this attempt to save our birds from cruelty and extermination shall succeed or fail. For if enough take the matter up with the Senate, that body will yield to the popular voice, the McLean amendment will be adopted, and, as there will be no difference to be adjusted in conference, the Senate's action will be final. England and Germany, strengthened by our action, will adopt similar laws; France, the feather trade badly damaged by the withdrawal of three such important markets, and subjected to pressure from outside, will soon have to fall in line; and

#### **THE BIRDS WILL BE SAVED.**

HENRY OLDYS,  
Silver Spring, Maryland.

*August 7, 1913.*



## LIST OF SENATORS.

Alabama . . .	John H. Bankhead. D. Joseph F. Johnston. D.	Nebraska . . .	Gilbert M. Hitchcock. D. George W. Norris. R.
Arizona . . .	Henry F. Ashurst. D. Marcus A. Smith. D.	Nevada . . .	Francis G. Newlands. D. Key Pittman. D.
Arkansas . . .	James P. Clarke. D. J. T. Robinson. D.	New Hampshire	Jacob H. Gallinger. R. Henry F. Hollis. D.
California . . .	George C. Perkins. R. John D. Works. R.	New Jersey . . .	William Hughes. D. James E. Martine. D.
Colorado . . .	John F. Shafroth. D. Charles S. Thomas. D.	New Mexico . . .	Thomas B. Catron. R. Albert B. Fall. R.
Connecticut . . .	Frank B. Brandegee. R. George P. McLean. R.	New York . . .	James A. O'Gorman. D. Elihu Root. R.
Delaware . . .	Henry A. Du Pont. R. Willard Saulsbury. D.	North Carolina	Lee S. Overman. D. <b>F. Mc L. Simmons.</b> D.
Florida . . .	Nathan P. Bryan. D. Duncan U. Fletcher. D.	North Dakota . . .	Asle J. Gronna. R. Porter J. McCumber. R.
Georgia . . .	Augustus O. Bacon. D. Hoke Smith. D.	Ohio . . . . .	Theodore E. Burton. R. Atlee Pomerene. D.
Idaho . . . . .	William E. Borah. R. James H. Brady. R.	Oklahoma . . .	Thomas P. Gore. D. Robert L. Owen. D.
Illinois . . . . .	J. Hamilton Lewis. D. Lawrence Y. Sherman. R.	Oregon . . . . .	George E. Chamberlain. D. Harry Lane. D.
Indiana . . . . .	John W. Kern. D. Benjamin F. Shiveley. D.	Pennsylvania . . .	George T. Oliver. R. Boies Penrose. R.
Iowa . . . . .	Albert B. Cummins. R. William S. Kenyon. R.	Rhode Island . .	Le Baron Colt. R. Henry F. Lippitt. R.
Kansas . . . . .	Joseph L. Bristow. R. William H. Thompson. D.	South Carolina . .	Ellison D. Smith. D. Benjamin R. Tillman. D.
Kentucky . . .	William O. Bradley. R. Ollie M. James. D.	South Dakota . .	Coe I. Crawford. R. Thomas Sterling. R.
Louisiana . . .	Joseph E. Ransdell. D. John R. Thornton. D.	Tennessee . . .	Luke Lea. D. John K. Shields. D.
Maine . . . . .	Edwin C. Burleigh. R. Charles F. Johnson. D.	Texas . . . . .	Charles Culberson. D. Morris Sheppard. D.
Maryland . . .	William P. Jackson. R. John W. Smith. D.	Utah . . . . .	Reed Smoot. R. George Sutherland. R.
Massachusetts . .	Henry Cabot Lodge. R. John W. Weeks. R.	Vermont . . . . .	William P. Dillingham. R. Carroll S. Page. R.
Michigan . . . .	William Alden Smith. R. Charles E. Townsend. R.	Virginia . . . . .	Thomas S. Martin. D. Claude A. Swanson. D.
Minnesota . . .	Moses E. Clapp. R. Knute Nelson. R.	Washington . . .	Wesley L. Jones. R. Miles Poindexter. R.
Mississippi . . .	John Sharp Williams. D. James K. Vardaman. D.	West Virginia . .	William E. Chilton. D. Nathan Goff. R.
Missouri . . . .	James A. Reed. D. William J. Stone. D.	Wisconsin . . . .	Robert M. La Follette. R. Isaac Stephenson. R.
Montana . . . .	Henry L. Myers. D. Thomas J. Walsh. D.	Wyoming . . . . .	Clarence D. Clark. R. Francis E. Warren. R.

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